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**On 13 September 2013, the BJP
nominated Narendra Modi as the
party's Prime Ministerial candidate
for 2014.**

"Mass Murderer" or "Development Man"? It depends on which side of the spectrum he is viewed from, because Narendra Modi is one of those politicians whose name prompts extremes of hate-filled anger or outright adulation. Despite polarizing Gujarat and India in more ways than one, Modi brilliantly does what it takes to survive in a democracy: win elections. Written by veteran journalist and writer, Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay, after several in-depth interviews, meticulous research and extensive travel through Gujarat, this book reveals hitherto unknown aspects of Narendra Modi's psyche: as a six-year-old boy selling tea to help out his father and distributing badges and raising slogans at the behest of a local political leader; abandoning his family and wife in search of his definition of truth; initiation into the RSS as a fledgling who ran errands for his seniors; his idea of Gujarati pride and Indian-ness; and finally, his meteoric rise which gave him a distinct identity post the 2002 Godhra riots.

Narendra Modi: The Man, The Times is a definitive biography of a man who may have challenged the basic principles of a sovereign secular nation but emerged at its destination as an undisputed and larger-than-life leader.

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See Dargah Photo after Page 182
See Page 315, 316 & 317

NARENDRA
Modi

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– *Hindustan Times*

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“He introduces his subject in a couple of words, constructs a hypothesis, goes in for evidences in its favour or against it and establishes or rejects it thus giving birth to a theory, all within the confines of merely two lines of a couplet or four lines of a quatrain.”

– *Hindustan Times*

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NARENDRA Modi: The Man. The Times

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To Varsha.
For making me believe that I still had it in me.

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Pirana Dargah on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, 2012. Photo credit: Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay



government doesn't host iftars, but many former chief ministers like Madhavsingh Solanki, Amarsingh Chaudhary and Chimanbhai Patel — all non-BJP CMs — regularly played host during Ramzan. Each one of them kept in mind local sensitivities and stuck to a vegetarian course.... When BJP came to power in 1995, the then CM Keshubhai Patel was in two minds about hosting iftar lest he invite the ire of Sangh Parivar hardliners. But, former prime minister A B Vajpayee asserted that Keshubhai host iftar. He played host twice — but avoided non-vegetarian food. The Raj Bhavan, which has a tradition of hosting iftars, too sticks to a 100% veg menu.

Although it is not necessary for Muslims to break fasts only with non-vegetarian food, what this underscores is that personal beliefs, practices, customs and taboos have become part of the public spaces. The government under Modi does not host iftaar parties because they see it as a form of appeasement — though in August 2012 Modi did tweet a congratulatory message for Muslims on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. However, the social consensus of disallowing Muslims to partake in their personal preferences in public spaces and gatherings further demonstrates that limits on display of their identity is imposed as a matter of regulation not exception. Not all of this is a post-Modi phenomenon. But the lines have become sharper and suggest that existing fault lines were cleverly amplified from 2002.

The second place which testifies to the dramatic transformation of inter-community relationships in Gujarat (in the aftermath of the post-Godhra violence is at the shrine in Pirana, on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, whose followers have ancestral roots in Kutch. This religious order was established almost five hundred years ago by Imam Shah, a *deviant* from Islam who has often been given the tag of a Sufi for want of another label. He set up the sect and initially drew followers from the community of Patels of Anjar Taluka in Kutch. The temporal head of Satyapanthis — as the followers were named — fused practices of Islam with Hindu traditions and evolved a code of his own. The Patels integrated with Muslim followers (Syeds) of Imam Shah who ran his religious order on democratic lines with a governing council taking all key decisions. The council consisted of ten people — seven Patels



and three Syeds and the successors of Imam Shah (called Kaka) were selected by mutual consultation over the past five centuries.

Soon, the Satyapanthis — like several other communities emerged as a small little *third religious* group, distinct from Hindus and Muslims. The *outsider* status of Satyapanthis started coming under strain from the late 1980s due to several reasons: growing sentiment among Patel followers and the then Kaka to give a greater “Hindu-thrust” to the sect and convert each member into a “political Hindu” being the most significant one. Called a dargah till then, the shrine came to be frequently referred to as a temple — deifying Shri Nishkalanki Narayan Bhagwan. The tombs which lay scattered around the shrine were one-by-one adorned with Hindu motifs. Rituals inside the *sanctum sanctorum* — the tomb of Imam Shah — acquired Hindu characteristics. In 1997, when I visited the shrine as part of a study on inter-community relations in Kutch, I still found Syeds among the regular devotees.

This was not the case in 2012 and a lot other than this had also changed. To begin with, the main gate of the dargah had been shut — which was a typical medieval structure and had a distinct influence of Islamic architecture. The entry to the shrine was now through a huge ornate gate, typical of temples with ample resources. The gate led into the main building of what was initially an adjunct but has now become the principal shrine. Inside the old dargah, barring the graves everything has a “Hindu look”. In the past decade, the Satyapanthis witnessed their gods being taken away. The head of the governing council, the current Kaka got agitated with my probing questions — pertaining to the virtual disappearance of Syeds from the shrine and the reasons why the original main gate was closed. Syeds may have been virtually turned away from what used to be their shrine also till a decade ago, but their “presence” still causes problems — especially for Modi. In September 2011, Modi launched a much-publicized officially-run campaign to promote social harmony. Called Sadbhavna Mission, the name was similar to programmes initiated by several Indian political leaders in the past with the intent of invoking secular-tokenism and have been accompanied by appropriate symbolism. But Modi did not make any gesture signalling public overtures to Muslims. The Sadbhavna Mission



grabbed headlines after Modi's refusal to accept a skull cap associated with Muslims though he accepted the shawl. Media reports called the cleric a Sufi leader — Syed Imam Shahi Sayed. But, he is one of the *deposed* members of the governing council of Satyapanthis. Due to this deposition, Sayed now speaks more like a Muslim and less like a believer of a rebel-sect. He told journalists that 'Modi's refusal to accept the cap is not my insult but an insult to Islam.' The contention of Vijay Rupani, BJP spokesman was similar to what Modi told me in an interview: 'Narendra Modi has clearly said that his policy is not of appeasement of a section of society unlike other parties, but our approach is development for all and treating everyone as equal.'

In less than a decade and a half, Kutch has witnessed social stratification that will be difficult to undo. Similarly, the Pirana Dargah has lost its name, its spiritual pluralism and a large section of its followers who have tragically reverted back to the faith from where the founder branched out. Though the onset of these developments pre-dates the Modi era in Gujarat, it reached acute and probably irreversible levels of disconnect in his tenure coinciding with the period when the "us" and "they" have become more antagonistic. When I had begun working on this biography I was painfully aware that the nascent schisms which I had witnessed in Gujarat in 1997 would have been brutally prised wider. The crudeness with which the divisions in the state were amplified, I was sure, would yield multiple narratives. To ensure that I did not stray from the narrative I was in search of — my own "Modinama" — I consciously decided to restrict my visit to only Pirana Dargah (as I still insisted on calling the place) and Kutch instead of travelling to other places in Gujarat known for spiritual diversity which includes Hindu folk deities. I had a benchmark for both the places and in the summer of 2012, the change that was visible was distressing, to say the least. But casting emotion aside, I decided to understand the causes behind these changes.

But before going into the causes, it also needs to be underscored that it is not that the "last lap" was always run by the Modi regime. Many of the phenomena that highlights the social divide in Gujarat either began during Modi's tenure or assumed outrageous dimensions in the years after 2002. For instance, how does society respond to the



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Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay dropped college and picked up journalism as a career in the early 1980s. He worked and wrote for several newspapers and magazines like *The Economic Times*, *Hindustan Times*, *Outlook* and *The Statesman*. He currently also presents a weekly show — “A Page From History” -- on Lok Sabha TV which showcases historical debates and issues.

He is also the author of *The Demolition: India At The Crossroads* published in 1994. Nilanjan is also a playwright and one of his plays has been performed by a leading amateur theatre group. He lives on the edge of Delhi, bordering Uttar Pradesh.

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Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay's book, *Narendra Modi: The Man, The Times* is "objective and well-researched."

— Ramachandra Guha, Historian & Author

Mukhopadhyay turns into a dispassionate observer. This time he uses words like a surgeon's scalpel. They hurt, they provoke. They also heal and restore balance.

— Ziya Us Salam, *The Hindu*

Mukhopadhyay has done a first-rate job... reading of the important texts is thorough and nicely woven into his writing.... Mukhopadhyay says Modi is our first anti-Nehruvian leader.

— Aakar Patel, *The Asian Age*

Mukhopadhyay's effort is rich in examination of the social milieu in which Modi grew up.

— Manjula Narayan, *The Hindustan Times*

Offers insights into who Modi is and what kind of prime minister he would make

— Zahir Janmohamed, *Boston Review*

Absorbing account of the politician who might be a trend-setter in India's much-needed change

— Hari Jaisingh, *The Pioneer*

Bound to keep the Modi-baiter as well as the Modi-lover engaged from the word go

— G Sampath, *Mint*

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